

I'm Known by How I've Grown, Part 3 - 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 – June 15th, 2014

- Today's teaching will be part three of a series I've titled, "I'm Known by How I've Grown."
- If you were to ask me what I see as the greatest hindrance to spiritual growth of a Christian, my answer would be carnality and worldliness.
- Here's why, carnality and worldliness not only hinder and retard our spiritual growth and maturity, but instead grow bitter fruit that's worldly.

- It's for this reason the Apostle Paul turns a corner of sorts and puts his finger on that which their spiritual immaturity could be attributed to.
- Perhaps better said, Paul is explaining the specific reasons for their carnality as mere "worldly men," so as to exhort them to just grow up.
- Lest you think I'm speaking bluntly on Paul's behalf, let me hasten to revisit verses one through four where we found his first two rebukes.

1. I'm unable to eat the meat of solid doctrine (Verses 1-2)

- Here Paul addresses them as worldly not spiritual though brothers in Christ who are as infants that are still not ready for solid food but milk.

2. I'm riddled with jealousy and conflict (Verses 3-4)

- Paul says they're carnality is evidenced by jealousy and arguing about who follows Paul or Apollos, which is why they act like worldly men.

3. I'm growing worldly and bitter fruit (Verses 5-9)

- v5 Paul says what is Apollos and Paul but only servants through whom you came to believe in the Lord, as He's assigned to each His task.
- v6-7 Paul uses the analogy of him planting the seed, and Apollos watering it being nothing because only God is able to make things grow.
- v8-9 He says, they plant and water having one purpose and they'll be rewarded for their labor, however, they were God's field and building.

- I'm hoping you'll allow me to sort through this, given that there's arguably a great deal of personal application packed into these five verses.
- In order to do this we first need to notice how Paul delineates between the laborers together with God from those who are the field of God.
- More specifically, the laborers who planted and watered the seed of God's Word, and those as and in the field that were the recipients of it.

- The reason I'm pointing out this distinction is that it will be germane to our understanding of what was actually happening in this church.
- It would appear that they were having a bitter rivalry over who was better, Apollos or Paul himself and as such, it was fueling their carnality.
- By that I mean, their carnal bickering was creating and growing a worldly and bitter fruit that was choking out any growth of spiritual fruit.

Matthew 13:18-23 NIV "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: (19) When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. (20) The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. (21) But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. (22) The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. (23) But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

- I find it interesting that in the Saviors parable the growth is on the part of the thorns, which come at the expense of the growth of the fruit.
- I would submit that when the thorns of carnality are allowed to grow and bear bitter fruit they choke out any potential growth of spiritual fruit.
- I suppose you could say that this is why I chose to title this series, "I'm Known by How I've Grown," instead of "I'm Known by If I've Grown."

Matthew 7:16-20 NKJV You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? (17) Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. (18) A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. (19) Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (20) Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

- While Matthew 7 is in the context of false prophets and false converts, it presents a question to everyone who professes to be a Christian.
- Namely, if by my fruit I'm known, am I bearing carnal fruit or am I bearing spiritual fruit? Am I bearing bad fruit, or am I bearing good fruit?
- If I'm a carnal Corinthian Christian I'm in conflict with others and in so doing I'm allowing a root of bitterness to spring up and cause trouble.

Hebrews 12:14-15 NKJV Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: (15) looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

- Here's the bottom-line, when that root of bitterness springs up it not only weighs us down it has the propensity to also take us down as well.
- I'll take it a step further and suggest that carnality eats us up on the inside, and weighs us down on the outside disabling us as Christians.
- I'll close with a true story about Shrek the Sheep, which you can do an Internet search on to see the video of this overgrown disabled lamb.
<http://tvnz.co.nz/national-news/archive-video-shrek-sheep-gets-shorn-9-41-4207609>

Back in 2004 in New Zealand, Shrek became famous after hiding in caves for about six years in which it's fleece was allowed to grow to an astonishing weight of approximately sixty pounds, which was enough wool to make 20 large men's suits. It's important to note that the average weight before sheering is about nine to ten pounds. In other words, Shrek's wool was six times the normal weight all because it hid the sheering of a shepherd.
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrek_\(sheep\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrek_(sheep))

- You probably already know where I'm going with all of this, so I'll get right to the point and say, we are all like Shrek and often stray away.

Isaiah 53:6 NKJV All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

- Be that as it may, there's good news for all who have gone astray back into the world's ways, and are weighed down by a crushing burden.

Matthew 11:28-30 NIV "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (30) For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."